

Theology series aids relationships

Growing up outside the Catholic Church in the '60s, I did not have the benefit of a strong instruction on chastity. Becoming a Catholic in 1999 opened for me a new world of sacraments, saints, popes and the Mass.

A friend, Lou Breschi, shared Christopher West's video tape series on John Paul II's, Theology of the Body (TOB) with me. My wife, Ginnie, and I watched the eight talks and saw he had written something so incredible that it needed to be shared with everyone - to heal the wounds so prevalent today in marriage and relationships. We agreed we would spend the rest of our lives learning and sharing this message which is the very logic of Christianity.

The legacy that John Paul left us is not new Catholic teaching, but a repackaging of the Gospel message "truth proposed not imposed."

He teaches us we are not called to be more spiritual, but to be more incarnational. We are embodied souls; He put flesh on our spiritual lives. Ginnie has a great way of looking at it: "We are not like a peanut, the hull being the body and the nut being the soul - discard the hull to get to the nut. Rather, we are like sugar snap peas, it's all good!"

Recognizing this, TOB helps us to answer two profound questions: "What does it mean to be human?" and "How do I live my life in a way to bring true happiness?"

To answer these, we consider what is the deepest yearning of every human heart. Is it to love and be loved? If so, how?

To answer these questions, John Paul takes us back to the garden, not my vegetable garden where we spend most of our free time in the summer, but "The Garden," where Adam and Eve lived and loved in perfection, which is our true calling. We get a glimpse that they, and we, are made in the image of God and called to participate in the eternal exchange of love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which is self-giving divine love. We learned there is a 'spousal meaning' of the body. We are made in one human nature, embodied as male and female and made for union and communion through the sincere and fruitful gift of self. One of the major keys of

TOB is that we are made for self-donation. Ask yourself, when are you happiest? Is it when you are giving or receiving?

John Paul proceeds to show us how the fall of man put an end to this perfection, but Christ's redemption gives us an opportunity to live this way again. Do you yearn for more meaning, true love in your relationships, in your sexuality? Do you believe it is even possible or just a remote hope? If you were given a real way in your real everyday life to realize your heart's deepest longing, would you accept it? Do you want it? If you do or are not sure, join us for the next study of TOB in the evening, March 9 at 7 p.m. or daytime March 10 at 9:15 a.m. at the Catholic Community of St Francis Xavier in Hunt Valley 410 963 2001 or at St Ursula in Parkville beginning Feb. 15 at 7 p.m., 410-529-3775.

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